

Child and Family Services Update

May 30, 2003

Carbon And Emery County Recruitment And Retention Of Resource Families

by Angela Khairallah, Out-of-Home State Specialist

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Update

“What can be done by next Tuesday?” This question is frequently asked by members of Utah’s team working with the national organization, Casey Family Programs, on the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) for the Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families. The work group team in the pilot site of Carbon and Emery Counties has been meeting regularly since January 2003 and has developed goals that focus on the key components of messaging; engaging resource families during the recruitment process; supporting families and children through the process and preparing them for placement; licensing; providing services and supports for resource families; developing relationships and supporting involvement with the agency; involving the community; and staffing.

What are we trying to accomplish? What change can we make that will result in improvement? How will we know that a change is improvement? The model for improvement, testing change, and meeting goals is based upon the PDSA cycle: **Plan, Do, Study, and Act**. The Plan involves objectives, questions, predictions, hypothesis, and who, what, when, where, and how. The Do is based on how you are going to carry out the plan and how you are going to document problems and unexpected results. The Study is analyzing data, comparing data to predictions, and summarizing what was learned. The Act focuses on what changes are to be made and what is the next PDSA cycle.

Key benefits of using the PDSA process are:

- Testing hunches quickly.
- Obtaining hunches on results quickly.
- Multiple hunches can be tested simultaneously.
- Identifying problems while they have minimal impact.
- Failure is allowed.
- Get buy-in as you go based on proof of success.
- Small changes may have large impacts.

Repeated and multiple PDSA cycles are used to achieve overall goals. Some important key concepts in testing PDSA cycles involve keeping tests small, keeping tests rapid, gathering data for learning not research, and sharing with and learning from other teams.

An example of a PDSA that is currently being tested in the Carbon and Emery Counties pilot site involves the key component of developing relationships and supporting involvement with the agency. To improve obtaining kinship information, CPS workers were encouraged to ask families during investigations, “Who are your

Child and Family Services Update

May 30, 2003

supports?” and “Who helps you care for your children?” These simple PDSA questions turned out to be such a success in gathering kinship information upfront that a subsequent PDSA cycle encourages all workers during their initial contacts with families to ask these questions.

Another example of a PDSA that is currently being implemented involves the key component of supporting resource families and children through the process and preparing them for placement. It was determined that there was a need to increase pre-placement information to children, out-of-home workers, resource families, and biological families in Carbon and Emery Counties. This involves expanding the use of Biographical Information Forms obtained from new prospective resource families during pre-service training. Once these forms are obtained, they will be kept in a binder at the Child and Family Services office. Resource family consultants and out-of-home workers will be able to use the Biographical Information Form to improve the placement selection process for children in out-of-home care. Once a placement selection has been made, out-of-home workers can share the information on the forms with the foster child as well as their biological family.

The next step of this BSC is using PDSA cycles for spread, and taking what has been learned, as well as the successes of the pilot site, and spreading it statewide to build a more effective foster care system. Work group teams will be organized in each region to help create and implement PDSAs that will reflect the needs of their areas in recruitment and retention of resource families.